



The holiness of Dominic, a light for the Order of Preachers

Dearest brothers and sisters, religious and lay members of the Order of Preachers,

On the 6th August 2021, we will celebrate the eight hundredth anniversary of Saint Dominic's *dies natalis*, recounted by Humbert of Romans in these words: "He said to them: 'Here, dearest brethren, is what I bequeath to you as sons, as to your rightful inheritance. Have charity, keep hold of humility, possess voluntary poverty. Oh Testament of peace...'"¹ Brother Dominic then fell asleep in death, leaving this testament of peace to his brethren, making them heirs of what had been his life's passion: to live with Christ, to learn the apostolic life from Him and to be configured to Christ through evangelical and apostolic life.

Such was the holiness of Dominic: a fervent desire for the Light of Christ to shine for all people, compassion for a suffering world called to be reborn to true life, zeal to serve a Church that would widen its tent to the dimensions of the world. In granting permission for his translation, Pope Gregory IX declared: "I knew him as a man who was loyal to the entire apostolic rule, and I am sure that, in heaven, he is joined in glory to the apostles."²

The celebration of the Jubilee of the confirmation of the Order has given new and dynamic impulse to the whole Order's commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel. With this letter, I invite you to draw from the source of holiness which fashioned Dominic as a preacher. St Catherine magnificently said of him that he took on himself "the office of My only-begotten Son, the Word. Rightly he appeared as an apostle in the world and sowed the seed of My Word with much truth and light, dissipating darkness and giving light."

Dominic's death, the death of a father and brother

After a long preaching tour in Northern Italy, brother Dominic falls gravely ill in Bologna. It is July 1221, and the town is so stifling, humid and hot that there is no hope of improvement for Dominic's health. The decision is made to carry Dominic to a small Benedictine hermitage on the hillside outside Bologna. Death, however, is drawing close. The witnesses of brother Ventura of Verona and brother Rodolfo of Faenza, recorded during the process of canonization in Bologna, give us providential insights into the last moments of the Saint's life. We can add to their precious testimony the edifying account of Blessed Jordan of Saxony.³

¹ *Legenda maior Sancti Dominici Humberti de Romanis*, 54, 21-26

² *Libellus de initiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 125

³ *Libellus de initiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 92-94

Dominic felt that the moment of encounter with the Lord who had seduced him during his adolescence was drawing near. He called together the few friars of the convent of Bologna and began to preach: “When he believed he was dying, he called the witness – that is, the prior – and the brothers. About twenty brothers went there with the said prior. After they assembled about him, lying on his bed, he began to preach and delivered a very beautiful and moving sermon.”⁴ According to Blessed Jordan, Dominic’s preaching as he was lying on his deathbed was given not to twenty but to twelve brethren: “On his deathbed he summoned twelve of the more prudent brethren and [exhorted] them to be zealous in promoting the Order and persevering in holiness.”⁵ Clearly, Jordan desires to draw a Christological and apostolic portrait of Dominic and his brethren, whereas brother Ventura offers us a liturgical account of the last moments of Dominic’s life: after receiving the sacrament of the sick and making a general confession, Dominic presides, as priest, the Office of commendation of his own soul to God, and intervenes many times, as if leading it. Thus Dominic dies during a liturgical act, at the heart of the liturgy of the dying. Brother Ventura recounts also a prayer addressed by Dominic to God, in the presence of his brethren, during which he commends them to Him along with his whole family: “Holy Father, thou knowest how I have freely remained steadfast in Thy will, and have guarded and kept those whom Thou hast given me. I recommend them to Thee. Keep and guard them.”⁶ This is a short rendition of Jesus’ farewell discourse during the Last Supper (John 17:12). In this prayer, we notice how Dominic remains elder brother, father and founder, the one who takes responsibility for his own brethren, in the image of his beloved Lord. Dominic spoke additional words on his deathbed: “Do not cry, since I shall be more useful to you where I am going than I could ever be here.”⁷ We can observe that the words “usefulness” and “effectiveness” were words that Dominic liked to repeat often. Effective charity should be a quality of his sons. His own usefulness would be greater in death than in life. Dominic died in the convent of Bologna according to his wish. As he feared being buried in the Benedictine monastery where he had stayed, he begged to be carried anew among his brethren. Once he was back in town and settled in one of the convent’s cells, he was asked whether he wished to be buried next to the relics of this or that saint. Dominic gave this superb answer: “God forbid that I be buried except under the feet of my brethren.”⁸ Here, in the light of these “*novissima verba*,” we discover not only his humility but the deep love that Dominic had for his community.

A mendicant’s humility, for preaching

“[The witness] sometimes saw the blessed Dominic himself going from door to door, begging alms and receiving a piece of bread like any pauper.” (*Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Paul of Venice, 42)

As death was approaching, Dominic asked insistently to be carried back to the convent so as to be buried “under the feet of my brethren.”⁹ This was his greatest wish. Yet this is only one aspect of the holiness of Dominic who, when he became a preacher, asked to be called “brother Dominic.”

He desired to be with his brethren. Indeed, he was convinced that the sign of fraternity is already, in itself, a kind of preaching. For Dominic, the Order of Preachers is an Order which seeks to follow in the footsteps of Jesus the preacher, going through towns and villages to proclaim the

⁴ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Ventura of Verona, 8

⁵ *Libellus*, 92

⁶ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Ventura of Verona, 8

⁷ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Rodolfo of Faenza, 33

⁸ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Ventura of Verona, 8

⁹ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Ventura of Verona, 8

good news of the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 4:23-25, Mk 1:39, Lk 4:44). The reality of fraternity is thereby presented as an echo of salvation, which is at the heart of the Order's proclamation. To proclaim the good news is to invite each one to discover, in their most intimate depth, the aspiration to live a life of fraternity with others in this world. It is to announce the hope that fraternity among all peoples anticipates the reality of the Kingdom in which the people of God will be gathered together on the last day. The sign of fraternity is thus the true 'pulpit' of preaching, presented both as a concrete, lived experience and as the hope of a future with God. It is a pulpit from which is proclaimed, on God's behalf, trust in the human capacity to create with each other, and with God, relationships which "nourish life." This is proclaimed not through theoretical discourses, but through listening to a Word verified in the concrete experience of a life lived with and for others.

He asked to be buried "under the feet of his brethren." We can probably interpret this desire as a sign of humility and lowliness. He who said that he would be more useful to his brethren after his death¹⁰ wishes to serve them by emulating the lowliness of Jesus who washed the feet of his disciples as their servant. Thus, Dominic's determination with regards to his resting place could well point to his desire to be conformed through grace to the very acts of Jesus. To be conformed to the One who did not cling to his own life, but lived out his proclamation of the Kingdom by rooting it in the gift of his life, offering it so that all may have life and be received in the joy of fraternity. He wants to remain in the midst of his brethren, even in death. Such is the sign of this gift of a life "spent" speaking with men about God and with God about men.¹¹ This sign thus manifests the deep meaning of itinerant mendicancy which Jesus had chosen, and through which He preached by giving his life. It is also the sign of the mendicant who, through his supplicant gesture, begs for the hospitality of his peers while inviting them to discover the new life of the Kingdom. "He came to his own..." (Jn 1:11).

Yet Dominic's request is even more significant, because it invites his brethren to draw their own sanctity from the reality of their lives as preachers. It was usual, at the time, to seek to be buried as close as possible to the relics of saints and confessors of the faith. In this sense, he desired to be buried as close as possible to the altar, in the hope of the communion of saints. Yet through his request Dominic expresses also that the reality of his brethren's fraternity is, in his eyes, a place of holiness equivalent to the value granted to the witness of the saints. Once again, holiness can be considered as the pulpit of the preachers' proclamation. They are invited, as brothers, to integrate their faith in the communion of saints within the concrete realities of life, and to draw from it the power of the word on the itinerant preacher's lips. Communities of preachers, holy preachings!

The preacher's humanity, in the image of the Son

"Dominic was so zealous for souls that he extended his charity and compassion, not only to the faithful, but also to infidels and gentiles and the damned in hell. He wept freely for them." (*Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Ventura of Verona, 8)

"May God, who made the kindness (*benignitatem*) and compassion (*humanitatem*) of our Saviour shine forth in his servant Dominic, make you conformed to the image of his Son." This formula for the solemn blessing given during the liturgical feast of Saint Dominic points to the heart of Dominic's holiness. To him alone, in the whole Sanctorale, is attributed this "kindness" (in English) or "tenderness" (in French). This tenderness is linked to the mystery through which the Son came to take on himself our humanity. This Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son our

¹⁰ *Libellus*, 93

¹¹ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar William of Monferrato, 13

Saviour was so essential in brother Dominic's preaching that it became, as it were, the inner light of his own humanity. Dominic's vocation to commit his whole life to the preaching of the Gospel moved him to find in the Incarnation the path that led him into the depths of his own humanity. In a certain way, this is also a vocation to be born to himself through the mystery of the truth he proclaimed (long have I sought you..., said St Augustine). The Gospel proclamation is thus offered as an inner journey towards oneself, towards the place of inner encounter where God, through his call, "builds", and "establishes" each one in his own filiation.

It seems to me that certain features can be drawn out specifically from Dominic's vocational "humanity": simplicity, compassion, frugality, friendship. The testimonies gathered by Dominic's biographers who had known him personally and the accounts of the canonisation process highlight unanimously both the depth and the simplicity of Dominic's humanity. "All men were swept into the embrace of his charity, and, in loving all, he was beloved by all."¹² This preacher is "moved with pity for the poor at the sight of their misery,"¹³ and receives the bread he begged for his brethren "on his knees, in great humility and devotion."¹⁴ Dominic is lifted up to God when he contemplates the generosity of his grace. He loves nothing better than to form friendships with others, and makes this a habitual pattern for sharing the Word of life. This is the simple humanity of one who comes close to others, of which Thomas Aquinas, speaking of the life of Jesus, would say "he made himself familiar...".

Insisting on Dominic's humanity serves not only to emphasise his own moral qualities, but also to illustrate the manner in which he desired to be a preacher. It is through the full unfolding of his humanity, by becoming familiar with everyone, that he desired to give witness to the One who came to establish his dwelling among us, and then to withdraw so as to give Him first place in the hearts and minds of those he would meet. When asked about the Order of Preachers, Blessed Jean-Joseph Lataste answered that it was "the Order of the friends of God." This answer is perhaps both a description of how the brothers and sisters of the Order desire to live with each other and with God, and a sign pointing to the finality of their preaching "*verbo et exemplo*," which they intend to offer in the Church, constantly tending towards this ultimate finality of the communion of everyone in God's friendship. This answer is an echo of the words of Christ, which should be echoed again in every preacher: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you." (Jn 15:16). I call you friends...

At the heart of this witness, the beautiful word "brother" resounds like a call. As soon as Dominic and Diego started to preach in the Lauragais region, Dominic the sub-prior asked insistently to be known henceforth as "brother Dominic."¹⁵ Here again we can see this as a sign of his simplicity and humility: It is not titles or ecclesial functions that qualify the preacher, but his way of being human. The one called "brother" is a member of the human communion in the friendship of God. The one called "brother" is a member of that great family of the friends of God that the Church is called to become. Here we have, as it were, a declaration of faith which lays the foundation of a theological understanding of the Church, and which elicits a theological practice of preaching. It is because of his desire to be a preacher like Jesus among his disciples that Dominic wants to commit himself "in the commitment of God" as a brother. This will be his path to sanctification: "to be conformed to the image of his Son." (Rm 8:29).

To preach like Christ and with Christ, a path of sanctification

"Brother Dominic carefully prepared himself and was unremitting in his preaching. His words were so moving

¹² *Libellus*, 107

¹³ *Libellus*, 10 ; *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar John of Spain, 29 ; of friar Stephen, 35.

¹⁴ *Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Paul of Venice, 42

¹⁵ *Libellus*, 21

that most of the time he stirred himself and his listeners to tears.” (*Acts of the process of canonisation*, Bologna, Testimony of friar Stephen, 37)

This path of sanctification, for Dominic, is marked by *the two mysteries of mercy and truth, which both converge towards freedom*, so dear to “Dominican spirituality.” From this viewpoint, the figure of Mary Magdalene is established as “apostle of the apostles”, called by the Risen One. This place more intimate to ourselves than we are to ourselves is the place of mercy. It is the place of truth, of realism and transparency where God is encountered in the intimacy of each person’s heart, and the place of forgiveness beyond all human measure, of new birth in mercy. The superabundant gift of mercy becomes then a call to plunge into the Gospel as its living source, to plunge into the Gospel – the light that reveals the mystery of each human life – as we were plunged into the waters of baptism. Remain in my Word, my word is truth. Or, more precisely: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (Jn 8:31)

Two texts written by Pope Honorius III for the confirmation of the Order and for its “recommendation” impose the command on the friars of the Order to *preach for the remission of sins*. These texts emphasise two very concrete aspects of the life chosen by Dominic. One is that the ministry of preaching (of evangelisation) can be conferred to the friars of the Order as a proper means of sanctification. The other is that this ministry is imposed on the friars for the remission of sins.

On one hand, they are required to preach the Gospel in this form of life which is “totally dedicated to the proclamation of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ This defines preaching as the presentation of the Name of the One who is to come. Preaching is the proclamation of the Name and of the coming of the Kingdom: “Moreover, since the goal, rather than the combat, grants the crown, and since, among all the virtues, only perseverance receives the offered crown for those running in the race (I Cor. 9:24), we call upon your charity and earnestly exhort you with the command, which we impose through these apostolic letters for the remission of your sins, that, ever more strengthened in the Lord, you strive to spread the Word of God (Ac 8:4) by being insistent in season and out of season and fulfilling the work of the evangelist in a praiseworthy manner (2 Tm 4:2-5).”¹⁷

On the other hand, this must be done as mendicants who have chosen the self-abasing state of voluntary poverty, both personal and collective. The Pope points out that this choice will make the preachers vulnerable, exposing them to all kinds of difficulties and dangers. This is why he comforts them in their salvific endeavours by granting them that “the privations and labours which you are about to undergo in carrying out this kind of duty will serve for the atonement of your sins.”¹⁸

For the friars, this path to holiness will be one of “*consecration to the Word*”, of *consecration to the truth*, as St Thomas Aquinas would present it in his Commentary on the Gospel of St John.

The letter of Pope Honorius III dated from the 18th January 1221 defines this “consecration” in the following words: “The One who ever makes His church fruitful with new offspring, wanting to make these modern times measure up to former times, and to propagate the Catholic faith, inspired you with a holy desire by which, having embraced poverty and made profession of regular life, you have given yourselves to the proclamation of the Word of God, preaching the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world.”

Dominic’s choice has been to plunge his own life into the mission of the Son, and so to allow the Spirit of the Son to conform his life to Christ’s own: “And [Christ’s] gifts were that some

¹⁶ Letter of Pope Honorius III, 18th January 1221

¹⁷ Letter of Pope Honorius III, 21st January 1217, to the prior and the friars of Saint-Romain, preachers in the country of Toulouse.

¹⁸ Letter of Pope Honorius III granting a privilege of indulgence, 12th December 1219

should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Ep 4:11-13) We perceive in these words of Paul the Apostle both unity in faith and unity in the knowledge of the Son of God. Yet we hear also the call given to believers (the "saints") to "go out" in order to walk on the path of the Son's mission. By choosing to give himself over to preaching, Dominic chose a path on which he allowed the Spirit to adjust him to God, justifying and sanctifying him. Yet at the same time he made his aspiration to holiness shape his entire life. His desire was for the Church of Christ to experience for herself the joy of her promised holiness, to the extent that she would expand herself by proclaiming the good news of this promise.

Dominic's holiness, a dream for the Church

"Made a pastor and illustrious leader among the people of God, he founded the new Order of Preachers by his holy labours, adorned it by his exemplary life, and has not ceased to support it by manifest and authentic miracles." (Gregory IX, Bull of canonisation)

It seems to me that, to have a "dream for the Church" is a central element of Dominic's holiness, as it was also for Catherine of Siena ("If I die, it is out of passion for the Church.") These two have contributed their solid ambition for the Church of Christ to the preaching of the Order ("I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!" Lk 12:49), an ambition concerned with both the life and the mission of the Church.

Following the second Vatican Council, we could say that the ambition of the Church of Christ is to be a sacrament for the world and in the world. In today's context, which calls so urgently for a renewal of evangelisation, it is the ambition to shift our perspective from maintenance or support of existing ecclesial communities to promotion of the same ecclesial communities as true "missionary subjects."

"Would that it were already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). St Dominic, I believe, was driven by Christ's own desire when facing all kinds of divisions that disfigured the Church in his time and endangered his mission of evangelisation. The strength of this desire – which led Jesus to consent fully to the supreme abandonment of himself, even to the Cross – is the source where Dominic would ceaselessly draw his prayer and his humanity: identifying his life with the unique life of the Son, given once for all, so that the world may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). The peaceful pictures of Dominic embracing the Cross of Christ, or tirelessly scrutinising the Word revealing Himself within the pages of Scripture, show us that, far from being morbid, Dominic's self-identification with Christ aims at adjusting his own desire for evangelisation to Christ's desire. Dominic's dream is one of a Church in constant foundation, that is to say in constant evangelisation. Dominic's desire to go to the Cumans does not demonstrate a wish to extend the Church in terms of enlarging territory, of building power or influence, or even of dominating over other beliefs. It is rather a desire born of love for the whole world, which seeks to grow so as to identify itself with Christ's own love for the world. Established in the knowledge of the Creator, this desire is confident with the knowledge that the human world is capable of offering hospitality to all, capable of entering into one single communion, and capable to open itself to God its Creator by sharing the common history of the people loved by God.

For this reason, Dominic dreams of a Church constantly "on the move". He experienced this himself when, despite having been formed from childhood to be a cleric, and having subsequently become a canon, he received, on the road to preaching, a call to become a brother from within his own clerical ministry. He discovered then how much his ministry had prepared

him to be at the service of a Church ever unfinished, who carries the Word beyond her borders. This for him took the shape of an anguish that filled his nights and his prayer. He knew that the communion offered in one and the same Kingdom open to all, required him to go and encounter the poor and the sinners, the heretics and the pagans. The Church Dominic wants to serve is a Church of forgiveness, of reconciliation and of communion. The Church “on the move” is also a Church that is built up in all her diversity by her own preaching. Indeed, responding to all those who join him through a succession of intuitions, Dominic will progressively form around himself a “family of preaching”, this “holy preaching” in which – provided each keep their own particular place and role, according to their own ecclesial status and mandate and according to their own formation – all will work together for the same evangelisation. They will all be driven by the same desire to contribute to the constant building up of the Church who will become more and more a friend of the world through her proclamation of the Kingdom, announcing forgiveness, reconciliation and peace. As with Dominic seated at the table of the innkeeper, or seated in the midst of his brethren at the table of the “miracle of the loaves”, through the sign of fraternity, they will invite all people to take their seat also at the same Table of the Kingdom. Fraternity here is the sign of a Church of communion.

This Church to which Dominic desires to commit all his life and calls his brothers and sisters to do so with him is a fraternal and friendly Church, moved by deep bonds of affection among her own members and for the people of God beyond her own borders. Pope Francis told the friars gathered in the 2016 chapter that the place to which the preacher is sent should be considered a “sacred land”, a place of holiness. Thus Dominic gave his preaching the horizon of the contemplation of grace at work in the history of the world, often beyond the visible limits of the Church, as well as the horizon of “apostolic conversion.” Indeed, this latter horizon is rooted in solidarity, to which the ministry of preaching calls us to commit our whole lives. The Apostle Paul said it in this way: “Like a nurse taking care of her children (...) we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves.” (1 Th 2:7-8) Thus the Church’s restructuring should always aim at promoting and cultivating the affection of the community for all.

In that way, we can understand intercession as an essential practice for strengthening our fraternal communities. Intercession opens up a double process of self-identification: on one hand, self-identification with those for whom the Lord is implored; on the other hand, self-identification with the One who implores for the world. From this same viewpoint, we can perceive the contemplative dimension of the prayer of Dominic, who would speak to God about the world. He never ceased to contemplate the mystery of mercy which is at the heart of the unfolding of “continued creation.” Liturgical prayer, so dear to Dominic, allows then for the community of the “holy preaching” to be constituted through this interweaving of intercession and contemplation, which is rooted in listening to the mystery of salvation in human history as it is revealed in holy Scripture.

To plunge into the work of grace: in God’s involvement

“Subjecting his flesh to his spirit and his sensitivity to reason, he became one and the same spirit with God, and completely devoted his attention to seeking Him through the excess of his mind. Moreover, in the eagerness of his compassion, he never departed from love for his neighbour.” (Gregory IX, Bull of canonisation)

We like to speak of Dominic as the preacher of grace. He was such by desiring with his whole being to live the very life of Christ the preacher, to the point that he could have spoken the

words of the Apostle Paul: “it is no longer I who preach, but Christ who preaches in me” (Gal 2:20). In order to do so, Dominic wanted to “plunge himself” in the Word which stirs the heart’s desire because it calls each one by name. This plunge is made in the wake of the baptismal plunge, as a vocation to live in the joy and hope of the Gospel. Yet it is at the same time a call eliciting a heartfelt desire for everyone to have life. It is therefore both a “vocation to oneself” as an experience of mercy, and a vocation to call others to become “friends of God.”

Dominic experienced this plunge into the Word as a plunge into the fullness of humanity, adorning his commitment with the substance of corporeality. This means of course the corporeality of each person in whom this experience of the heart becomes incarnate: from this viewpoint, the “global” and “integral” scope of the vocation to evangelise is made clear. Yet this also means the corporeality of the Church. The community is the place of adjustment to this corporeality of the Church. This is where limitation and incompleteness are experienced, as they are by each one living in community. Each person can test their capacity to allow the community to which they belong and in which they live to become now a community “on the move”: the movement of conversion, the movement of human renewal, movement as a sign of communion (the “brotherly harmony, which corresponds with the inmost wishes of all men”¹⁹). Mendicant poverty is perhaps a reminder of the reality of these movements which we have to undertake...

To be plunged into the Word, to be plunged into humanity: two pathways towards holiness. A third pathway offered by Dominic is the one of the intellect: the intellect as the place where we experience the eschatological structure of reason (“Truth does not change, it grows”, said Lacordaire). The intellect is indeed the place where we can enjoy an indefinite scope of progress in truth. It also allows each one to structure their faith in solidity, without losing themselves in erroneous “opinions of faith.” In the end, Dominic’s conviction, by devoting so much importance to the study of the Word and of right doctrine, is that intellectual endeavour – seeking truth – is a path of liberation from beliefs which alienate us, and a door to contemplating the truth that liberates us. The intellect is not “fixed”, but constantly seeks the truth, in the contemplation of the economy of the revelation of the mystery of salvation in history. This revelation in history reveals that, for the preacher, history is the primary locus for the contemplation of grace, a “sacred land” where preachers are sent to hear the Word... This third way therefore is one where holiness trusts the intellect because, under the light of grace, it trusts men. It trusts men in their history, because the task is to elicit, within history, a faith that is simpler, but oh so much brighter!

Saint Dominic, a saint for today

In his letter dated from the 11th February 1218, Honorius III recommended the Order in this way: “We ask your allegiance and, commanding you by apostolic letters, strongly urge that, with us, you encourage in their praiseworthy design the friars of the Order of Preachers (whose salutary ministry and religious institute we believe to be pleasing to God) and regard them, out of reverence for us and the Apostolic See, as approved.” In these times when the Church is called to renew ceaselessly her zeal for evangelisation and thus experience the joy of being “in a permanent state of mission,” the witness of Dominic’s holiness is a call for us today. Beyond the memorial of the 6th August 1221, the celebrations which will mark the year 2021 can be for the Order an opportunity to share with the Church the treasure we have received from Dominic. The commitment to the adventure of evangelisation opens up, for each believer, a path on which can be experienced the joy to be “adjusted” to Jesus, the Preacher.

It is as a preacher that Dominic received the grace of holiness, and this is the way that he opened up for his daughters and sons. Thus, Dominic’s holiness extends itself in the holiness of his sons and daughters, in the contexts and places where brothers and sisters have been led to

¹⁹ Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 7

preach, proclaiming the Word and working for the good of humanity. Like Dominic, they have been attentive to the signs of the times and eager to serve communion in humanity and in the Church. By joining together an intense life of prayer for the world, a generous commitment to fraternity and a demanding search for truth, they have been apostles, like Saint Dominic or Saint Vincent Ferrer, doctors like Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Catherine of Siena, or martyrs, like Saint Peter of Verona.

In these last years, other figures have been acknowledged as witnesses of holiness through preaching, such as brother Jean-Joseph Lataste, apostle of the prisons; Pier Giorgio Frassati, “the man of the beatitudes” who is such an important model to the youth today; brother Giuseppe Girotti, martyred under Nazism; Blessed Marie Poussepin, indefatigable missionary apostle of charity; Blessed Marie-Alphonsine Ghattas and her daring foundation in the Middle East... Very recently brother Pierre Claverie, Bishop of Oran, was recognised as a martyr with his eighteen companions in Algeria. All these Saints and Blesseds together manifest the model of holiness progressively promoted in the Order since the canonisation of Saint Dominic in 1234, which is found in the triad of preacher, doctor and martyr. Soon, the Order would like to offer to the Church the witness of holiness of brother Marie-Joseph Lagrange, of Giorgio La Pira, a layman who devoted his life to serve the public common good, of Bartolome de Las Casas, and of Girolamo Savonarola. Together with them, so many men and women, religious and lay, have found in Saint Dominic the inspiration to choose to commit themselves to the Gospel, and to find their life by proclaiming and giving witness to the good news of the Kingdom. Saint Dominic, a holiness for today!

It is with profound thanksgiving for the path of holiness opened up by Saint Dominic that we will celebrate the anniversary of his death during the year starting on the 6th January 2021 until the 6th January 2022.

We will give thanks for the path that he has opened up for us, and on which we desire to walk as preachers for our sanctification. We will give thanks for the witness of so many sisters and brothers whose holiness is welcomed by the Church as a precious gift for all the faithful. We will give thanks for Dominic’s intercession to God, promised by him to his sorrowful brethren, which gives its strength to holy preaching today. And we will give thanks with the keen awareness that the celebration of his memory is at the same time a prayer: that through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Preachers, and of Saint Dominic, the brothers and sisters of the Order, lay and religious, apostolic and monastic, confirm their “holy preaching” by their service to humanity and to the Church.

Given in Santa Sabina, on the 6th August 2018,

Your brother in Saint Dominic,



br. Bruno Cadore, O.P.

Master of the order of Preachers

*« O Spem miram quam dedisti mortis hora te fletibus
Dum post mortem promisti te pro futurum fratribus :
Imple Pater quod dixisti nos tuis juvans precibus.
Qui tot signis claruisti in aegrorum corporibus,
Nobis opem ferens Christi, aegris medere moribus.
Imple Pater... »*